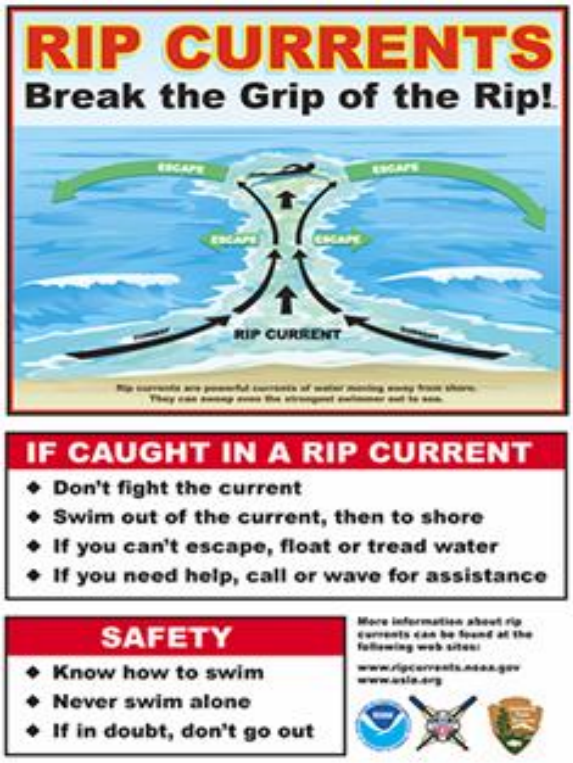
NOAA, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE, WEATHER FORECAST OFFICE

Miami, Florida 33165



Rip Currents are Deadliest in Spring and Summer

Rip currents are south Florida's deadliest weather-related hazard. Since 1979, a total of 228 deaths have been attributed to this phenomenon, more than tropical cyclones and lightning combined. Although rip currents can and do occur year-round, often during fair weather, the six-month period from March to August is statistically the most dangerous time of year. In the past five years alone, over 70 percent of all rip current deaths have occurred between March and August. The combination of spring break and summer vacation along with weather factors such as warmer air and surf temperatures, occasional tropical cyclones and moderate to strong onshore breezes are likely factors for the increased rip current drowning incidents during this six-month period.

Now that the beginning of the deadliest period for rip currents has arrived, here are some recommended tips to keep people safe from these fair weather killers:

- Monitor the latest rip current forecasts and statements from the National Weather Service via NOAA Weather Radio and the Internet, as well as through local television and radio. Make sure to check the surf conditions before heading to the beach.

- Know how to swim and don't swim alone.

- Always swim at a guarded beach. Since 2005, at least 72 percent of all south Florida rip current related deaths took place at unguarded beaches, with only 10 percent occurring at guarded beaches. Heed the advice of lifeguards and pay attention to warning flags posted at lifeguard stands and at beach access points.

- If caught in a rip current, don't panic or try to swim directly against the current. Instead, swim sideways until out of the current. If escaping the current is not possible, float or tread water until freed from the rip current, then swim safely back to the beach. Call or wave to get the attention of lifeguards or other rescue personnel at the beach.

For more information on rip currents and rip current safety, please visit the National Weather Service's Rip Current Awareness site at http://ripcurrents.noaa.gov